

With a passion to rebuild, Hawaii's GOP can be a force again

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By Shirlene Dela Cruz Ostrov

Hawaii's Republican Party may be down, but it definitely isn't out. In fact, its condition reminds me of Mark Twain's quote, "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated." Now we've obviously got a steep hill to climb. With only five Republicans in the state House of Representatives and none in the Senate, we struggle to get our voices heard. And we aren't represented in our congressional delegation, a daily tragedy for Hawaii with Republicans in control of the U.S. House and Senate, and the White House.

But just as the successful business executive doesn't worry whether times are good or bad, and rather focuses on different opportunities, I think Hawaii's Republicans have an excellent opportunity to rebuild and offer voters a real choice.

We begin that process in next weekend when Hawaii Republicans hold our state convention on Kauai. Contrary to conventional wisdom, I see a future of opportunity for Hawaii's Republican Party, which is why I'm running for the position of state chairman.

All the elements for success are there. For example, our state legislative delegation may be small, but it's a diverse and deep bench of talent, energy and experience.

And we have within our party a dynamic mix of experienced political leadership and enthusiastic newcomers. The large numbers of people who turned out last fall for our presidential caucuses was a dramatic statement about the size of the GOP base in Hawaii.

In speaking with a wide range of party members, I've found no shortage of enthusiasm to make the Hawaii GOP the party of real choice. The Hawaii Republican Party is not just the party of no, nor are we simply the party of tax cuts. I believe we're the party of aloha and ohana. We are the party that wants to see every resident thrive so they can build their business, family and community without excessive government interference. That's the future we see for Hawaii.

It's the future we chose to build for our family. After 23 years of active duty service in the U.S. Air Force, my husband and I felt it was time to raise our twin daughters in Hawaii. We wanted them to experience the same benefits of diversity, culture and natural beauty that I was fortunate to enjoy growing up on Oahu.

And as a mother who was born and raised in Hawaii, I believe I have to do my part to ensure that my daughters can afford to make a life for themselves and stay in the Islands.

I chose to become active in party affairs because I think we can do better in Hawaii. But I also know from my years in the service that we'll succeed only if we sweat the details. For Hawaii Republicans, that means rebuilding a financial base for our party, rebuilding our membership one precinct at a time, and focusing on winning races, one election at a time.

Our goal is nothing less than being able to offer Hawaii voters a real choice.